WI-74 Old Salisbury City Hall and Firehouse Salisbury Private

One of the most distinctive buildings to define Salisbury's historic business district and skyline is the old City Hall and Firehouse, a squarish two-and-a-half story red brick structure dominated by a four-story tower, which is capped by a pyramidal roofed spire. The walls of the municipal building feature a range of window and surface treatments that provide the exterior with a lively architectural display. The front entrance of the building is set within a large round arched opening at the base of the tower, which originally served as one of three round arched entrance bays for fire fighting equipment. The entrance arch is highlighted in yellow brick as are several first, second, and third floor window arches. The windows to the right of the entrance occupy the space where the other two arched openings were originally positioned. Around 1915, the arched openings were modified so that larger motorized vehicles could pass through the doorways. The bracketed roof sheltered two large door openings with folding doors. Eventually the garage door openings were infilled with windows when the fire department vacated the building. The side walls of the city hall and firehouse feature long two-and-a-half story pavilions that project slightly from the main block and are pierced by tripartite windows. Accenting the space between the first and second floor windows is a rusticated stone beltcourse and wall sections laid in a basket weave-type pattern of brickwork. The gabled pediments atop each pavilion feature round arched openings filled with small multi-paned windows.

The construction of the old City Hall and Firehouse is well documented through city records and the newspaper articles that survive in the *Salisbury Advertiser*. In February 1896, the Salisbury City Council purchased what was then known as the "Tracy lot" on West Church Street for \$1,000 from George C. Hill. Contractor Thomas H. Mitchell was retained to prepare plans for the construction project. Building began that summer with the laying of the cornerstone celebrated in a July 4th ceremony. Construction continued through the summer months. By September 19th, the *Salisbury Advertiser* announced:

Carpenters are engaged laying the floors and putting on the wainscoting and moulding of the New City Hall. The plastering is already completed and the building will be ready to hand over to the Mayor and Council next month.

The building is a gem. It is probably the handsomest public building on the peninsula south of Wilmington. It is of sand pressed brick laid in red mortar, granite trimmings and slate roof.

The ground floor, which will be used exclusively for the fire apparatus, is laid in Portland cement. The second floor will contain the offices for the city government, fireman's hall, and fireman's parlor. The third floor will be used for gymnasium. Messrs. Slemons & Lankford are the contractors and Mr. Thomas H. Mitchell the architect.

While the four-story tower stands out as the building's signature architectural feature, it had a practical original use as well. The interior of the tower above the first floor was left largely open so that hoses could be hung on racks to dry. The Salisbury City Council and the City fire department shared this building until 1928 when a new firehouse was erected on South Division Street. The City Council expanded the building southward with a brick addition around 1952.

### MARYLAND HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN INFORMATION

RESOURCE NAME:	OLD SALISBURY CITY HALL AND FIREHOUSE
MHT INVENTORY NUMBE	R: WI-74
MARYLAND COMPREHEN	NSIVE PLAN DATA
1. Historic Period Theme(s):	Architecture Government
2. Geographic Orientation:	Eastern Shore
3. Chronological/Developmen	nt Period(s): Industrial/Urban Dominance 1870-1930
4. Resource Type(s):	City Hall Firehouse City Police Station

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

## MARYLAND INVENTORY OF

Survey No.	WI-74
Magi No.	
DOE 110	

1. Nam	e (indicate pr	eferred name)		
historic	Old Salisbury (	City Hall and Fi	rehouse	
and/or common	Salisbury City	Police Departmen	nt	
2. Loca		•		
street & number	110 West Churc	n Street	_	not for publication
city, town	Salisbury	vicinity of	congressional district	First
state	Maryland	county	Wicomico	
3. Clas	sification			
Category  district building(s) structure site object	Ownership  _X public  private  both  Public Acquisition  in process  being considerednot_applicable	Status  X occupied  unoccupied  work in progress  Accessible  X yes: restricted  yes: unrestricted  no	Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial military	museum park park religious scientific transportation other:
<b>4.</b> Own	er of Prope	rty (give names a	nd mailing addresses	s of <u>all</u> owners)
name	City of Salis	oury		
street & number			telephone no	· :
city, town	Salisbury,	state	and zip code Mary	land 21801
5. Loca	ation of Leg	al Description	on .	
courthouse, regis	stry of deeds, etc.	Nicomico County	Clerk of Court	liber
street & number	Wicomico Co	ounty Courthouse		folio
city, town	Salisbury		state	Maryland
6. Repr	esentation	in Existing	Historical Surve	eys
titie	Maryland H	istorical Trust	Inventory of His	toric Properties
date	1976		federalX state	countyioca
pository for su	rvey records Mar	yland Historical	Trust	
city, town	Crov	nsville	state	MD 21032

7. Desci	ription			Survey No.	WI-74
Condition excellent	deteriorated	Check one unaltered	Check one  X original site		
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Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

**Description** 

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The old Salisbury City Hall and Firehouse building, currently the Salisbury City Police Department, stands at 110 West Church Street in the central business district of Salisbury, Wicomico County, Maryland. The two-and-a-half story, squarish brick building faces north. Erected in 1896, the old City Hall building is a two-and-a-half story, asymmetrically designed brick structure dominated by a slightly projecting four story brick tower and topped by a modified pyramidal roof. The building is laid in stretcher bond with pressed bricks set in red mortar. The late nineteenth century structure extends to the rear with a three-story mid-twentieth century brick addition.

The north (main) facade is an uneven four-bay elevation with an entrance located in the base of the off-center tower, which projects a few inches from the main wall surface. The bay at the northwest corner projects slightly as well and is capped by a gabled dormer. A partially glazed front door is set within a much larger round arched opening, which formerly served as a garage entrance bay. The opening is now fitted with wide sidelights and as well as an arched transom that frames the door. The entrance arch is further distinguished by a band of yellow colored bricks around the arch and small buttresses are located on each side. Fixed in the foot of the left buttress is a marble datestone inscribed "1896." Located atop the entrance is a large marble plaque inscribed, "City Hall." A narrow bay to the left of the entrance is pierced by a large nine over one sash window topped by a segmental brick arch laid in yellow colored brick. This opening originally served as the front entrance. The wall surface to the right (west) of the current entrance is fitted with a bank of nine-over-nine sash windows that replaced the former folding entrance doors where the fire engines formerly entered and exited. The bank of windows is sheltered by a shed roof featuring a simple block eave, and narrow pilasters are interspersed between each window opening. The shed roof and double door openings replaced two arched door openings that were executed in the same fashion as the entrance arch. The garage entrance was altered by 1917, when photographs document the alteration. The second floor is defined by an uneven fenestration as well with a large window opening piercing the tower, and segmental arched window openings marking the adjacent bays. A rusticated granite beltcourse stretches around the middle of the building and continues under the second floor windows. The second floor windows are further distinguished by yellow brick segmental arches, which follow in line with a yellow brick band across the adjacent wall surfaces. The base of the modified pyramidal roof is finished with a blocked cornice. Originally a metal cresting finished the top of the pyramidal roof. The gabled dormer fixed atop the northwestern bay is pierced by a around arched window opening fitted with small multi-pane windows.

The upper levels of the tower are defined by a variety of brickwork finishes that mark the third and fourth floors. The third floor height is distinguished by a

(Continued)

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 1800–1899 1900–	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric agriculture architecture art commerce communications	heck and justify below community planning conservation economics education engineering exploration/settler industry invention	ng landscape architectur law literature military music	science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater
Specific dates	1896	Builder/Architect	Thomas H. Mitchell	, Architect
a Appl	_	B _xCD  ABCD	_	

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

One of the most distinctive buildings to define Salisbury's historic business district and skyline is the old City Hall and Firehouse, a squarish two-and-a-half story red brick structure dominated by a four-story tower, which is capped by a pyramidal roofed spire. The walls of the municipal building feature a range of window and surface treatments that provide the exterior with a lively architectural display. The front entrance of the building is set within a large round arched opening at the base of the tower, which originally served as one of three round arched entrance bays for fire fighting equipment. The entrance arch is highlighted in yellow brick as are several first, second, and third floor window arches. The windows to the right of the entrance occupy the space where the other two arched openings were originally positioned. Around 1915, the arched openings were modified so that larger motorized vehicles could pass through the doorways. The bracketed roof sheltered two large door openings with folding doors. Eventually the garage door openings were infilled with windows when the fire department vacated the building. The side walls of the city hall and firehouse feature long two-and-a-half story pavilions that project slightly from the main block and are pierced by tripartite windows. Accenting the space between the first and second floor windows is a rusticated stone beltcourse and wall sections laid in a basket weave-type pattern of brickwork. The gabled pediments atop each pavilion feature round arched openings filled with small multi-paned windows.

The old City Hall and Firehouse building is a critical architectural and historical feature of Salisbury's historic downtown thereby deserving a *Category A* listing, which identifies structures that must be retained due to a high level of significance.

#### **History and Support**

8. Significance

The construction of the old City Hall and Firehouse is well documented through city records and the newspaper articles that survive in the *Salisbury Advertiser*. In February 1896, the Salisbury City Council purchased what was then known as the "Tracy lot" on West Church Street for \$1,000 from George C. Hill. Contractor Thomas H. Mitchell was

(Continued)

WI-74

Survey No.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geograp	hical Data			
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The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to:

Maryland Historical Trust Shaw House 21 State Circle

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

(301) 269-2438

Maryland Historical Trust MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

DHCP/DHCD 100 COMMUNITY PLACE CROWNSVILLE, MD 21032-2023

-514-7600

7.1 DESCRIPTION (Continued) Old Salisbury City Hall and Firehouse Salisbury, Wicomico County, Maryland

slightly recessed and arched niche with the arch highlighted in yellow brick. The arched openings continue on the east and west faces of the tower. Above the arched recesses is a series of rectangular brick panels that are recessed as well. The top of the third floor is defined by brick corbelling. The tower is capped with a modified pyramidal roof. The base of the tower roof is sloped on four sides with 25/1-pane dormer windows interrupting the roofline. The truncated pyramidal base has a square rooftop tower with louvered sides and a pointed, slate covered spire.

The west side elevation is a balanced facade with two slightly projecting bays topped by gable roofs. Each floor of each pavilion is pierced by tripartite windows of single pane sash framed by rusticated granite sills and lintels. The rusticated granite sills on the second floor continue as a beltcourse as well. Fixed between the first and second floor windows is an elaborate textured brickwork that follows a modified basket weave pattern. The two pavilions feature gabled roofs pierced by slightly pointed arch window openings filled with multi-pane windows. A capped chimney stack is located between the two dormer roofs.

The east side elevation is similar to the west wall with a pair of slightly projecting gable-roofed pavilions dominating the wall surface. The window and roof treatments are the same. A bricked up door opening is located in the southeast corner. Remaining on the second floor are fifteen-over-one sash windows.

The rear (south) wall of the City Hall building is entirely covered by a three story, mid twentieth century flat roofed addition of common bond brick. The brick walls are pierced by large sash windows, and concrete serves as a beltcourse and parapet cap. A large furnace stack rises from the northeast corner of the addition.

The interior of the building has been significantly altered, especially after the fire department relocated and the building was converted solely to office space during the second quarter of the twentieth century. The entrance foyer is sheathed with modern sheet paneling. A mid twentieth century stair rises on the east side of the building.

8.1 SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)
Old City Hall and Firehouse
Salisbury, Wicomico County, Maryland

retained to prepare plans for the construction project.(1) Building began that summer with the laying of the cornerstone celebrated in a July 4th ceremony. Construction continued through the summer months. By September 19th, the *Salisbury Advertiser* announced:

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While the four-story tower stands out as the buildings signature architectural feature, it had a practical use as well. The interior of the tower above the first floor was left largely open so that hoses could be hung on racks to dry.(3) The Salisbury City Council and the City fire department shared this building until 1928 when a new fire house was erected on South Division Street. The City Council expanded the building to the southward with a brick addition in 1952.(4)

#### **Footnotes**

- 1 Salisbury Advertiser, February 29, 1896 (Wicomico County Free Library)
- 2 Salisbury Advertiser, September 19, 1896 (Wicomico County Free Library)
- 3 Salisbury Advertiser, March 21, 1896 (Wicomico County Free Library)
- 4 Clay, Anne Kennerly Morris, Collection of Wicomico County Histories, "The City Hall of Salisbury, Maryland: A History," Lower Delmarva Genealogical Society, 1990. (Research Center for Delmarva History and Culture, Salisbury State University)

## History of The Salisbury Fire Department

### A Volunteer Organization

The Salisbury Fire Department came to life as a formal organization at the call of the citizens of Salisbury on August 28, 1879.

On that date all taxpayers met at the Court House and voted for the organization of a trained and equiped fire department. The expenditure of \$4,100 for a Silsby fire engine was voted by the taxpayers.

On Sept. 6 the Town Commissioners adopted the recommendations of the taxpayers, voting organization of the fire department, electing Dr. L. S. Bell as chief, and setting up an installment plan of paying for the fire engine over a ten year period.

The organization of the Salisbury Volunteer Fire Department supplanted previous volunteer organizations, bucket brigades and pump companies, untrained and with insufficient equipment to cope with fire

The town of Salisbury had burned once, on August 18, 1860. At 2 a.m. volunteer firemen answered the call of St. Peter's church bell. Their little hand engine - purchased after the old tan yard and Humphrey's grist mill had burned - was in the onestory fire house where the City Hall now stands. The fire was just around the corner, at the northwest corner of Main and St. Peter's Streets.

A dozen men ran to the little fire house. Willing hands grabbed the shaft and ropes of the wooden fire engine. The volunteers ran with their engine past the wildly clanging bell, down St. Peter's street to the corner. There it was connected to one of the town's pumps. The 20-foot hose line was run out.

Volunteers pumped a stream of water from the town pump, which normally served to quench the thirst of townsmen and their horses, into the fire engine. The engine consisted of a wooden tank about four feet high and three feet square. Two hand pumps sent the water from the tank through the fire hose with some pressure as firemen on either side of the contraption rocked back and forth on the cradle-like handle frame which operated the pumps. Willing backs were unable to cope with the flames. Fire engulfed the Daniel Davis building and spread. Firemen were driven from their hoseline and engine. The town's only firefighting apparatus burned on the spot.

Before dawn the 500 residents of Old Salisbury saw their town in flames. By ten o'clock in the morning the center of the town was in ruins. A bucket brigade had finally stopped the flames on Division road. St. Peter's church, where the bell hung, was burned. Homes and businesses of the town, which then consisted of what is now Salisbury's shopping district, were razed. Loss was \$150,000.

After the fire of 1860 interest in firefighting was kept alive by a handful of volunteers with makeshift equipment.

On August 25, 1872, the fire company was reorganized and a small hand engine purchased with money raised by public subscription.

A call for help went out to Wilmington in 1879 when fire threatened Jackson's Mill and fire companies, with modern steamer fire engines, drawn by

matched teams of horses, and huge hand-pulled reels of hose were sent by fast train to Salisbury. The town was saved and, on July 29, 1879, the Town Commissioners voted to send the city of Wilmington a letter of thanks for assistance.

Salisburians had seen how fire could be halted by modern fire equipment in the hands of trained firemen and, in fear of a repetition of the fire of 1860, agitation began for a modern fire company and modern equipment.

modern equipment.
Following the taxo

Following the taxpayers' meeting to form the Fire Department and the action of the town commissioners in buying the Silsby engine, interest in the Fire Department grew. By Oct. 20th the Commissioners bought two tons of gas coal as fuel for the engine. On Nov. 3rd the Fire Department received an appropriation of \$100 and the first installment was paid on the new engine.

A hook and ladder company was also formed at the time, the first meeting being on Nov. 1st with William B. Tilghman presiding. Business of the first meeting included the election of officers, the selection of the name, Tilghman Truck Co., No. 1, a proposal to solicit public subscriptions, and the selection of a uniform. The uniform was to consist of a regular fireman's hat, with hook and ladder shield, hound tip on hat and to cost \$4.50 each. The shirt was to be gray trimmed with black. The belt, black trimmed with red, costing \$1.38. In January the new company decided that dues of 25 cents a month were too great and cut them to 10 cents. Fifteen members agreed to contribute \$1 each to clear up the indebtedness of the company. And a committee was named to have the hook and ladders constructed. The gray and black shirt was too conservative for members of the new company and they voted that the shirt be red and black.

By December, 1880 the Hook and Ladder Company was ready to turn out in full regalia for a Christmas parade. Efforts were being made to have the company's ladder truck painted and ready for the parade. It could not be done and the parade was postponed.

The company was later incorporated into the Salisbury Volunteer Fire Department and George C. Hill, foreman of the company, became fire chief.

With the hook and ladder equipment the department had its Silsby steamer, named the L. P. Almond in honor of the Mayor of Wilmington, and two hose carriages, each carrying 500 feet of hose. The hose carriages were mounted on five-foot wheels. A long shaft had handgrips for four runners, and a reel held a long rope for additional men to pull in racing the carriages to the fire.

Two dashing gray horses, who saw more prosiac duty on the city's street wagon, pulled the fire engine. When the fire alarm sounded they would dash, almost without a word from their driver, back to the fire house, their wagon clattering behind them. By the time they were in place on either side of the shafts of the steamer, and the harness dropped upon them, black smoke was pouring from the boiler stack and steam was up.

## (HISTORY OF THE SALISBURY FIRE DEPARTMENT --- Continued)

Salisbury's greatest disaster was the fire of 1886. Then the vesper call of the church bell, on Oct. 17, was changed to the dreaded clangor of the fire alarm. A fire had been discovered in a stable on Dock street and, fanned by a brisk south wind, was spreading to adjoining frame dwellings. Bystanders, instead of fighting the stable fire, awaited the arrival of the steamer. It did not work and it did not get into action until the fire was out.

The fire raced up Main street, consuming homes and business buildings with such rapidity that furniture and personal effects were lost. Dwellings, stores, post office, St. Peter's Church and the town hall were burned. City records, from which much of this account is taken, were saved. The area from Camden bridge to North Division Street was razed. Loss was \$800,000. Wilmington, Pocomoke and Crisfield sent men and fire fighting equipment.

Until now the Town Commissioners had been mainly concerned with lighting streets, keeping hogs locked up, putting non-taxpayers to work on city streets, and opening drainage ditches.

After the fire the Town Council went into special sessions to mark burned property off the assessment books.

The Silsby engine, which had failed completely in the fire of 1886, redeemed itself in the great Jackson Mill fire of 1899. During that fire it pumped for a straight 28 hours, only four hours less than the national record of continuous service. Its fires were drawn beneath its boiler only when the danger was over. Wilmington again responded to this fire, as did Crisfield and Pocomoke. A second Silsby pumper, purchased from Reading, Pa., and brought here for resale to Snow Hill, was put into service during this fire.

Its excellent service was a strong selling point and Salisbury purchased it, sending the first Silsby back to the factory to be rebuilt.

The second Silsby was sold to Lewes, Del., in 1916 when Salisbury purchased its first motorized equipment.

Then they put on their minutes a notice for the chief of the Salisbury Fire Department to meet with them on Nov. 23.

The outcome was the city's first effort in fire prevention. The city employed Jesse H. Farlow at \$1 per day as first engineer of the steamer to keep it in order for immediate use. It passed an ordinance prohibiting the burning of paper on the streets.

It set up the first fire zone, prohibiting the construction of any building in the fire zone of any materials other than brick, stone, iron or other non-combustible material.

The growing Salisbury brought a need for increased fire protection and, in 1928 Salisbury Fire Headquarters Building on South Division St., was completed to house the growing department and its equipment. By 1930 Salisbury Fire Company No. 2 was organized with headquarters on Brown and Naylor St. to serve that area after a series of mill fires had endangered the eastern section of the city.

During World War II the Salisbury Fire Department was crippled by loss of trained firemen, equipment was difficult to obtain, and maintenance of Salisbury's buildings was inadequate. Fire hazards increased and fire losses mounted until, in a few years, losses neared that of the fire of 1886. A fire marshall was appointed and a survey showed the need of new equipment, an intensified training program, and removal of fire hazards throughout the city. That program is now under way and fire losses are nearing a 20-year record low.

Also during the war Civilian Defense equipment was utilized to equip a fire boat. That equipment, and the volunteers who man it, constitute the Marine Division of the fire department. Incorporated Dec. 1, 1944. The division responds to commercial district fires, in reach of its lines, and to all waterfront blazes.

The Salisbury Fire Department now operates 12 pieces of motorized equipment. It has 7 pumpers capable of throwing 4400 gallons of water a minute. It has its own portable lighting plant. And it operates the public ambulance, donated by the Salisbury Lions Club. The latest piece of fire equipment is the aerial truck which was received in March of 1947. A radio communications system and new up-to-date gas masks are on order.

A list of the chiefs of the Salisbury Fire Department includes: Dr. L. S. Bell, George C. Hill, S. S. Smyth, John P. Owens, F. A. Grier, Sr., Ned Sermon, William Killam, John Davis, F. A. Grier, Jr., John Lank, F. A. Grier, Jr., William J. Downing, Jr. F. A. Grier, Jr. W. Austin Moore, Sr., Slemons Taylor, Walter B. Disharoon and W. Austin Moore, Sr.

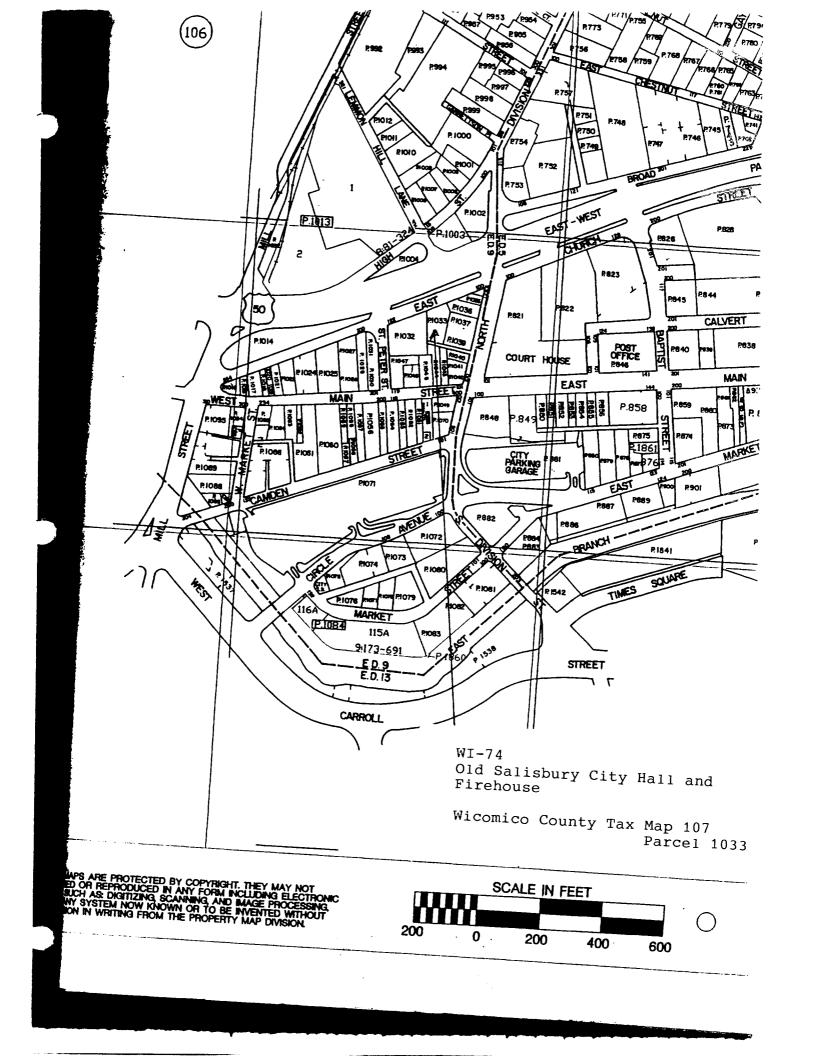
W. Austin Moore, Sr. is present chief of the Salisbury Fire Department. Officers of its three divisions are:

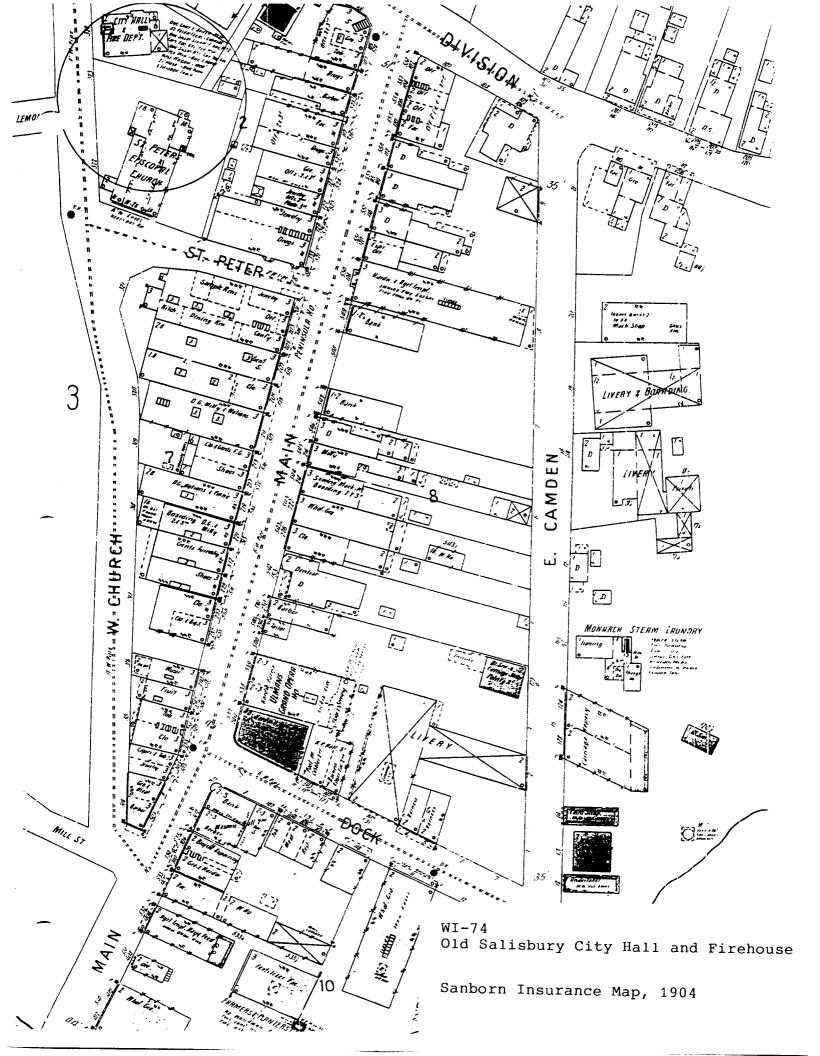
Headquarters Company: Calvin Cropper, president; James A. White, secretary, and L. Thomas Parker, Jr., treasurer.

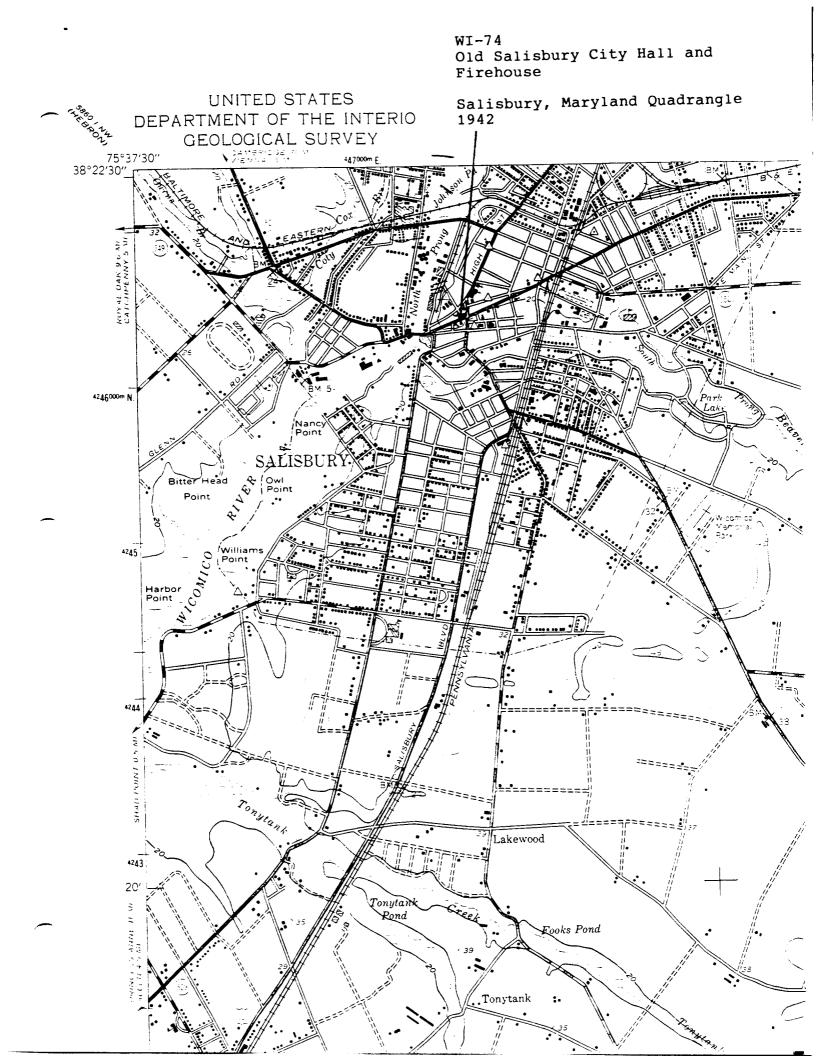
No. 2 Company: Joseph Brown, president; Paul Martin, secretary, and Arthur Dykes, treasurer.

Marine Division: Fred A. Grier, Jr., president; Norman W. Wingate, vice-president; John G. Dahlinger, secretary; Robert S. Chronister, assistant secretary, and Victor G. Taylor, treasurer. Richard H. Dana is Captain and Victor Taylor, Chief Engineer.

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